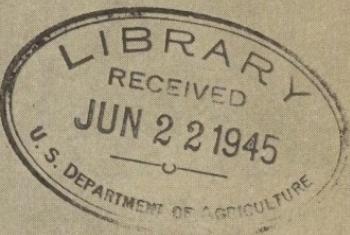


Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1.6
So 307
Reserve

On the Level

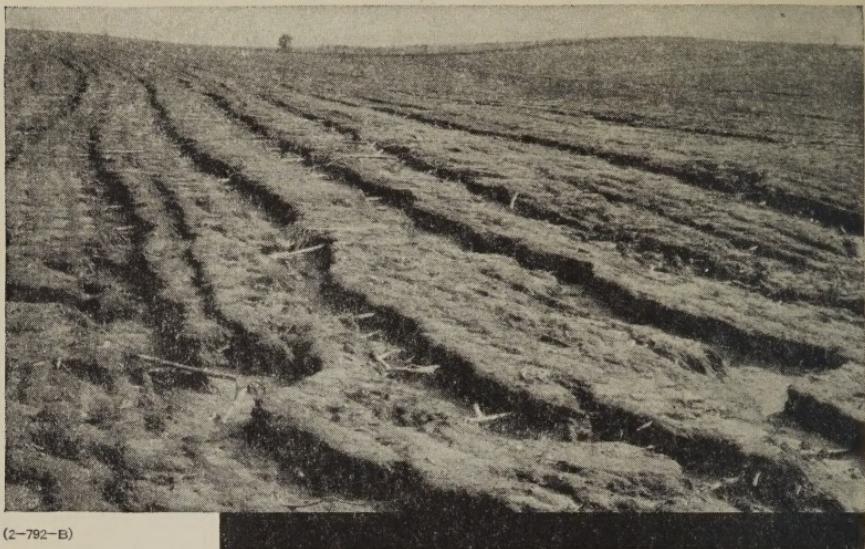


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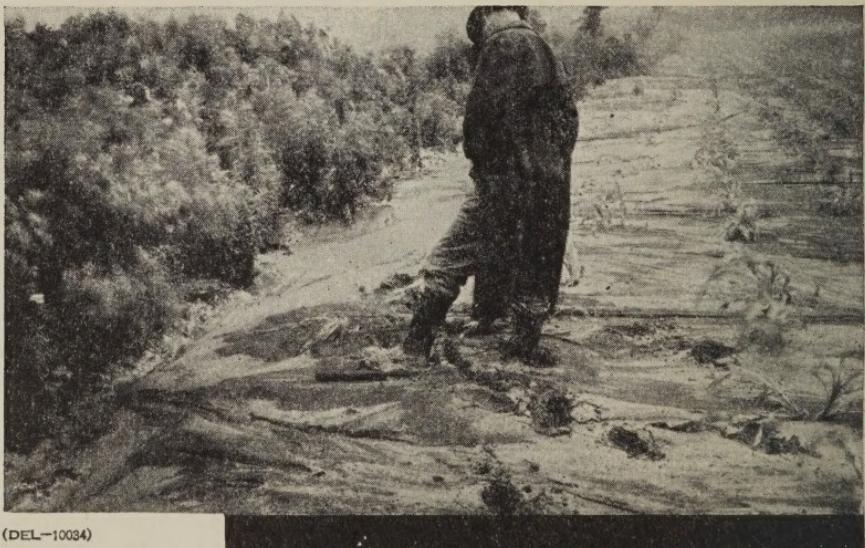
*Contour
Cultivation*
**in CONSERVATION
FARMING**

United States Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
cooperating with
Soil Conservation Districts

Crop rows, running up and down the hill, promote soil washing.



Corn rows in this field form gutters down which the soil is washed by every rain.

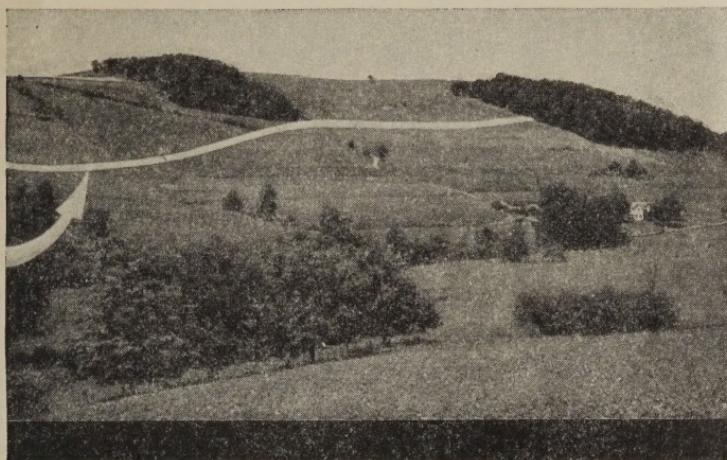


Ankle-deep silt indicates the large amount of soil washed off this gentle slope from between the straight rows of corn.

Crop rows on the level form barriers to stop soil and water from washing downgrade.

Level lines will curve according to the rolling nature of the field.

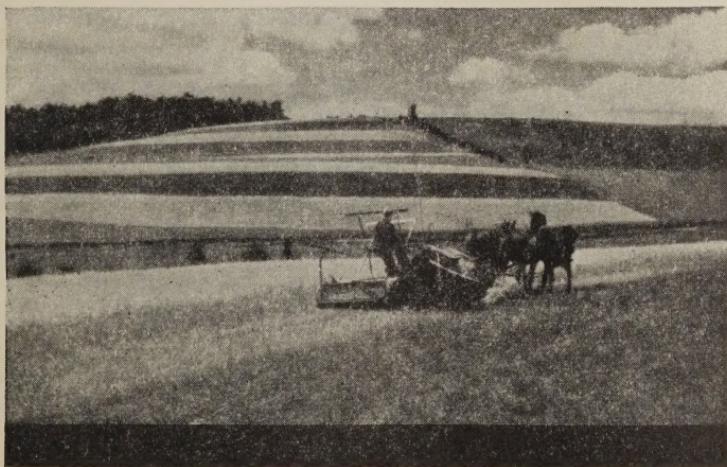
A
CONTOUR
LINE



(NY-506-B)

The white line shows how a level line—or contour line—curves in a rolling field.

Contour cultivation often saves power.

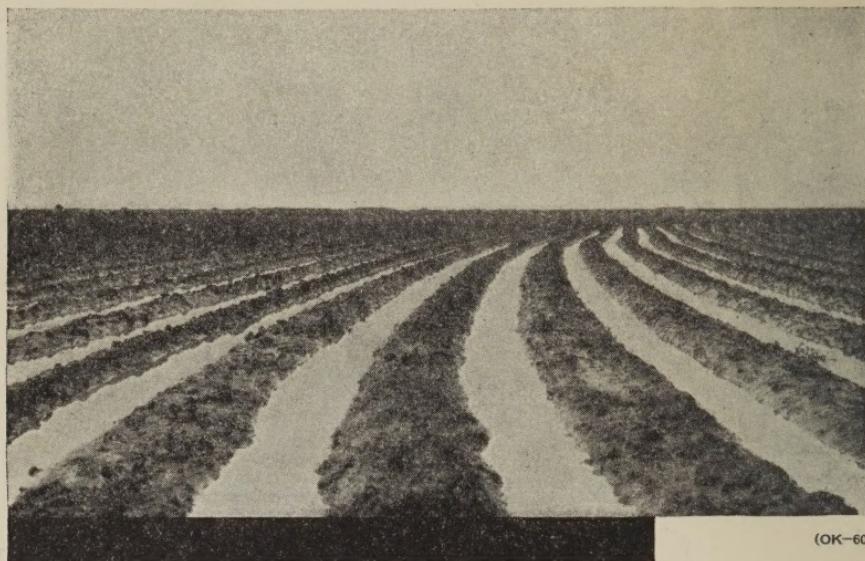


(NY-420)

Farmers find it no more difficult to operate tillage machinery in contoured fields than in fields with straight rows. Frequently contour cultivation requires less power because there are no upgrade drags.

It is often necessary to combine contour cultivation with other measures to prevent soil erosion.

Contour tillage saves precious moisture in dry areas.



(OK-60)

By holding water where it falls, contour cultivation helps store moisture in the soil in areas where lack of rainfall endangers the crops.



**Straight Rows
460 lbs.**



**Contoured
540 lbs.**

Records made in west Texas showed that sorghums when planted on the contour yielded 80 pounds to the acre more than when planted in straight rows. Moisture was conserved in the contoured fields.

Contouring prevents erosion in orchards.

Are Your Crop Rows SOIL GUTTERS or SOIL SAVERS?

Contour cultivation is one easy method for farmers to help stop soil from washing off their croplands. It means simply planting the rows on the level, across the slope, instead of in straight lines that run up and down the hill.

Much of the soil erosion that is robbing farmers of millions of dollars worth of soil fertility every year is caused by the practice of planting rows of crops in straight lines, up and down grade, regardless of the rolling character of the land. A change to contour cultivation is one of the first steps toward stopping this destructive soil loss.

Cultivating on the contour is not a "cure-all" for soil erosion in all places. Experience has

proved that more than one practice is needed to hold the soil in place under most conditions. Contour cultivation, however, is one important method of conserving soil, and is widely used either alone, or in combination with other practices.

On gentle slopes, where the soil does not wash too easily, soil erosion can be effectively checked by cultivating crops on the contour. The furrows lying across the slope, hold the water where it falls and let it sink into the soil where it is needed.

When planning to plow a field on the contour for the first time, it is best to start by laying out an accurate guide line on the exact level. This is easily done with the aid of a small hand level and

a set of stakes that are driven into the ground at intervals to mark the curving line.

In fields that have only long, gentle slopes, only a few exact contours need be staked out to guide the plowman in turning the first furrow. If the field is marked by steep, rolling slopes, several exact contours should be staked out at convenient intervals.

It is important that contour furrows be held as closely as possible to the exact level. Otherwise, they will be less effective in checking soil erosion.

Farmers in soil conservation districts who want help in running contour lines should apply to their district supervisors. Your county agent can also advise you on this subject, and give you other bulletins describing soil conservation work.

How to start contour cultivation.



(NY-20225)

Two men with a small hand level and some stakes lay out guide lines on the absolute level.



(SC-D5-3)

Here the farmer has plowed several furrows, starting with the guide line at right. Black arrows show the stakes that marked the contour layed out with a level.

NOTES

